



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**  
**WASHINGTON DC 20420**

June 7, 2000

Ms. Barbara Walters  
20/20  
ABC News  
147 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10023

Dear Ms. Walters:

It should come as no surprise to anyone on *20/20's* production staff that I am dismayed about the words you were given to read leading up to the June 2, 2000, story on missing veterans' claims.

The story that followed did nothing to substantiate, "Thousands of files have disappeared, some purposely wiped out." In fact, that wasn't even raised in the story that followed. This is not a complaint about Bob Brown's feature. I'll do that separately. But, I wanted to make certain that you understood that when words carry the power they do when you say them, the message should at least be true.

I know you are not responsible for the editorial content of every *20/20* story, but it seems to me that if what you say is not credible, it reflects not just on the program or ABC, but upon you as well.

By the way, thanks for the update on Hugh Downs. We miss him, too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hanson".

John Hanson